

ZCZC RDUWRKPNS ALL
TTAA00 KRAH DDHHMM

NCZ007>011-021>028-038>043-073>078-083>086-088-089-052100-

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC
800 AM EDT WED MAR 05 2008

TORNADO DRILL TODAY 930 AM

The annual Severe Weather Awareness Week tornado drill is today. At 915 am, National Weather Service offices all over the state of North Carolina will issue a test alert message over NOAA weather radio in the form of a required monthly test.

The drill is an opportunity for our schools, businesses, and residents to practice their tornado safety plans. For those without plans, this is the opportune time to sit down and develop a plan to protect you and your family.

TODAY'S TOPIC IS TORNADOES

Tornados are one of nature's most violent phenomena. Tornado season typically starts in Spring in the months of March...April and May. Tornadoes have touched down in the state in all months with the largest number of tornado related fatalities occurring in March. Other months with the highest numbers of tornado related fatalities include April...May and November. The two peak seasons for tornadoes in Central North Carolina are Spring and Fall. Violent tornadoes with winds in excess of 200 mph have struck the area as early as late March as in the case of the 1984 Red Spring Tornado and as late as November as was the case of 1988 Raleigh Tornado.

Just this past February the nation experienced the deadliest tornado outbreak to hit the country since 1985. Fifty seven lives were taken by as many as 60 tornadoes which raced across Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. Many of the fatalities occurred in mobile homes, automobiles and outdoors. Despite the tragic loss of life many individuals in the direct paths of the tornadoes survived. In many cases just a few minutes and seconds saved lives as people heeded the warnings and took cover. In several cases proper planning by schools officials resulted in basketball games being stopped and attendees taking shelter in the hallways and designated safe areas within the schools. In one instance the gymnasium suffered significant damage and partial roof collapse where just minutes earlier over a thousand people were seated. When proper planning and action come together lives are saved.

Over the past 10 years...nearly 400 tornadoes have struck North Carolina resulting in numerous deaths, and hundreds of reported injuries. Tornadoes can be a real threat impacting the area nearly every year. Fortunately, most of tornadoes that strike the area are relatively weak and short lived. However, even weak tornadoes pack winds of 60 to 110 mph. A little over half of tornadoes in our state have occurred between 3pm and 8pm, but tornadoes have touched down at all hours. The deadliest months for tornadoes are March and November with May coming in third. The majority of intense tornadoes with winds in excess of 150 mph have occurred in Central North Carolina where the population is the greatest.

In essence a tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes can occur virtually any time of the year and any time of day or night. Most tornado deaths and injuries across the state have occurred outdoors, in automobiles, and mobile homes. When a tornado warning is issued for your area or if you spot a tornado...seek shelter in a substantial building. The safest place is in an interior bathroom or closet. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Stay away from windows as debris picked up by a tornado can easily shatter a window and enter your house.

If you are caught outdoors...seek shelter in a low spot like a ditch or culvert. You want to get as low as possible to protect yourself from all of the flying debris in a tornado. The debris within the tornado is what causes nearly all of the injuries and deaths. If in your car and threatened by a tornado...abandon your vehicle and seek shelter in a substantial structure or in a ditch. Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle. Tornadoes do not travel in straight lines and it can be very difficult to determine what direction the tornado is moving. Also never seek shelter from a tornado under an overpass. There is no safe place under an overpass. In fact seeking shelter under an overpass puts you more at risk from violent winds and flying debris.

The National Weather Service will issue tornado watches when conditions are favorable for thunderstorms to produce tornadoes. Once a tornado is spotted or detected by radar...the National Weather Service will issue a tornado warning. Any time a tornado warning is issued for your area...take action to protect your life as well as the lives of your family.

\$\$

NNNN